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UNCLAS AMMAN 006445

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON MIDDLE EAST ISSUES

Summary

-- Lead stories in all papers today, October 7, focus on King Abdullah's meeting with Jordanian MPs, during which he expressed Jordan's rejection and denunciation of the Israeli attack on Syrian territory as being "in violation of international legitimacy". The Security Council deliberations of Syria's draft resolution to condemn the Israeli attack is another lead story in all papers today. Reports highlight the U.S. rejection of the draft resolution and focus on President Bush's emphasis that Israel has the right to defend itself, but that he urged Israel not to escalate the tension in the region. Another lead story highlights the New York Times story that the White House has decided to form a new team under National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice to "review" the U.S. policy in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Editorial Commentary

-- "The need for a unified Palestinian front"

Columnist Yaqoub Jaber writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (10/07): "The American reluctance to get involved in the Middle East peace process has a number of reasons, some of which are directly linked to the U.S. administration, where the conservatives are in control. If we are to look at the Palestinian part of the formula, we would find that the incapability of the Palestinians to speak with one voice, through a government that represents a national unity, has contributed greatly to the fact that the United States reluctance to get involved.. The Palestinians badly need to form a unified front that has the sole purpose of establishing the Palestinian state on all territories occupied in 1967. Such a front would be able to impose its agenda, not only on Israel and the United States, but on everyone who want to see an end to this long-standing struggle."

-- "A new episode of the disasters series"

Semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (10/07) editorializes: "With the unprecedented Israeli raid against Syria, Tel Aviv has once again succeeded with additional support from Washington to expand the circle of danger and to resort to violence and force in times of severe problems. The Israelis found their 'golden goose' in the fight against terrorism, because they can thwart the peace process, start ethnic cleansing, destroy the core of the Palestinian state, violate the sovereignty of other states, and fabricate all forms of accusations, all in the name of fighting terrorism and with the blind support of the Republican administration in Washington.. As has been the case with the disgusting American bias in favor of Israel, Washington alone was 'understanding' of the Israeli raid, amidst international denunciations and condemnations on the widest scale.. Targeting Syria at this stage has its own specificity. Damascus is wary of the potential pressure from its American 'neighbor' on its borders with Iraq, accompanied by Israeli raids as promised by Tel Aviv. This could signal the emergence of a new very critical geopolitical situation that could find a venting point in South Lebanon.. The region is thus thrown in the circle of dangers.. These are the headlines of the disastrous scenario that is being prepared for, if not already implemented, the region, and all during the final year of President Bush's term in office; the President who has proved that he is incapable of being a partner in any peace."

GNEHM